

# 1978 ore spill in Butte leaves hazardous waste

**By Dave Kirkpatrick**  
Standard Staff Writer

A 1978 ore-concentrate spill on the railroad tracks between Main and Montana Streets left dangerous amounts of arsenic, lead and cad-

mium in the area, an Environmental Protection Agency spokesman said Monday.

Mike Holmes said officials are concerned about the levels of the metals left in the area when a Butte, Anaconda & Pacific Railway car dumped 80,000 gallons of con-

centrate over a 200-foot stretch.

"Our concern is to remove them out of the residential area," he said, "and get them to a controlled area."

The spill happened on the track just north of Fremont Street in July. Please see ORE Page 10

## Ore spill leaves problems . . .

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1978 when the bottom door on one of the cars opened as the train headed to the Anaconda smelter.

Sara Weinstock, head of the EPA soils removal project in Butte, said Friday that Butte-Silver Bow public works employees, along with Anaconda Co. workers, attempted to cleanup the spill at the time.

She said officials saved what they could for smelting and attempted to flush the rest of the concentrate into the city's sewer system. Some of the concentrate flowed down alleys and into yards, she added.

At the time, she said, people didn't realize how hazardous the concentrate could be, so cleanup efforts were not as thorough as necessary.

Weinstock said she expects officials will find small piles of concentrate in the area as well as concentrate spread over larger areas.

Holmes said the site is being included in the EPA's Butte Priority Soils Removal Action and cleanup in the area. It should begin the first week of June and be completed sometime in July, he said.

Samples were taken two weeks ago, he said, and once they are analyzed and an agreement is reached with Arco, work will begin.

He said the material will likely be taken to an area behind the Berkeley Pit where it will be stored until a permanent site is selected.

An estimated 500,000 cubic yards of contaminated soils will be removed this summer under the priority soils project. More than 25 "source areas" in Butte have been identified for the project.

Holmes said the concentrate doesn't present a danger to groundwater since there are no wells in the area, but children should be kept away from the site until cleanup takes place.

"They're more prone to be playing in it and that sort of thing," he said.

Weinstock said she expects officials will find similar sites in the future as more cleanup work is performed in the Butte area.

The 1978 spill was not a major issue at the time, she said, so it was not originally part of the soils removal project.

She said if people are aware of such incidents they should contact the Butte EPA office.

A public hearing on the 1978 spill and the cleanup action to be taken will be May 21. Other soil removal work will also be discussed at the hearing.

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